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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem, well managed, is a powerful force for effective learning. Research has shown that good self-esteem is associated with analytical thinking, persistence, creative ability, social independence, stability and high expectations, and that the antecedents of positive self-esteem are found in parental models who provide firm guidance in the total process of becoming a responsible person. Students "at-risk" suffer from poor self-esteem and are in need of supportive and innovative education. Numerous studies and model programs have established the value of self-esteem programs in schools and communities. The primary factor in schools with successful self-esteem programs appears to be a faculty and administration dedicated to the belief that every student can learn and achieve and who care and are sensitive to the needs of those at risk for failure. Student empowerment through peer tutoring and counseling, cooperative learning, school/community service projects, and self-management programs are highly effective. Every school district should help its students develop self-esteem and personal and social responsibility as an integrated part of its total curriculum. (A diagram for developing positive self-esteem; a list of self-affirmations; and a self-evaluation form for social and personal responsibility are included.) (ABL)

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ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH SELF-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Robert E. Valett

"Oft-times nothing profits more than self-esteem
grounded on just and right, well managed."
- John Milton

The final report of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility (Toward A State of Esteem, 1990) defined self-esteem as "appreciating my own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others." The two volume final report presents a summary of extensive research and widely used programs with recommendations for improving self-esteem in the schools, workplace, and community settings.

A significant study by Wattenberg and Wells (1962) showed that self-concepts of kindergarten children were better predictors of reading success (two and one-half years later) than were IQ test scores. Bandura and Schunk (1981) demonstrated that primary age children developed self-efficacy and mastery of mathematical operations using self-motivation strategies with reasonable goals. Extensive research by Coopersmith (1981) clearly indicated that good self-esteem is associated with analytical thinking, persistence, creative ability, social independence, stability and high expectations, and that the antecedents of positive self-esteem are found in parental models who provide firm guidance in the total process of becoming a responsible person. Walberg (1984) reported that the way that parents interact with children at home is twice as predictive of children's success in school than is their family's social or economic status. Covington's (1989) review of the research concluded that the need to establish and maintain feelings of self-worth and dignity are essential elements in school achievement.

Accordingly, the California task force found that schools which feature self-esteem as a clearly stated component of their goals, policies and practices are more successful academically as well as in developing healthy self-esteem. Therefore, it was recommended that every school district in California should adopt the promotion of self-esteem and personal and social responsibility as a major goal in its total curriculum.

The Appendixes to Toward a State of Esteem contains a wealth of useful information. It lists hundreds of programs, projects, curricula, books, agencies and other resources for developing self-esteem; for example, the resource inventory of 235 programs used in California with self-esteem components describes such diverse elements as those listed below:

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Self-Esteem Enhancement	Violence Prevention
Alternative Education	Human Relations Training
Cooperative Learning	Independent Living Skills
Effective Parenting	Family Life Education
Substance Abuse Programs	Foster Grandparents
Juvenile Delinquency Prevention	Suicide Intervention
Student Support Centers	Humanizing Schools
Peer Counseling-Tutoring	Community Service
Goal Orientation	Career Organization
Outward Bound-Wilderness Programs	Achievement & Excellence

MODEL PROGRAMS.

Schools with successful self-esteem programs have several essential components. The primary factor appears to be a faculty and administration dedicated to the belief that every student can learn and achieve and who care and are sensitive to the needs of those at risk of failure. Family involvement and parent education are critical elements. Student empowerment through peer tutoring and counseling, cooperative learning, school/community service projects, and self-management programs are highly effective. Other frequent components include real-life skills curricula, flexible scheduling, creative arts, and various computer programs which provide individualized learning and systematic reinforcement. A number of uniquely successful school programs have received widespread news coverage.

The Project Self Esteem at the Willow Glen Elementary School in Visalia has been in operation for over five years and is widely supported by parents, staff and children. Lessons cover such topics as goal-setting, substance abuse, values (friendship, kindness, etc.) and improving relationships with peers. The program is taught with the assistance of parent volunteers.

DeWolf High School students attend Camp Esteem in the Sierra Nevada foothills for a week at a time. Workshop sessions are designed to improve teenagers' self-confidence, decision-making skills, interpersonal communications and conflict management. The camp is sponsored by the Fresno Unified School District, The Boys and Girls Club of Fresno and the Fresno Police Department.

Century High School in Santa Ana has a student body enrollment of 1600 which is 93 percent minority. Its innovative program features a highly dedicated faculty, intensive computer technology and flexible scheduling. Instead of bells classes begin to the sound of music. Earned rewards, special privileges, and honors provide ongoing recognition for good achievement. Student performance is high and dropout rates for 1988-89 were at an incredibly low 3.2 percent.

The Monterey County Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility is also unique. It has developed a community mobilization plan with goals and program recommendations covering the family, the education system, the workplace, and the community at large. Programs and strategies are shared at regular conferences and workshops.

Numerous self-esteem books, curricula, and program resources are now available for all levels of education. Most schools tend to adapt programs and develop a variety of supplemental materials to meet the unique needs of their student body . Attached are three examples illustrating model strategies, affirmation charts, and self-management guides.

ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIALS.

The first attachment is a chart entitled Developing Positive Self-esteem. It has proven useful in the classroom for stimulating student discussion on understanding self-esteem and how it is achieved. The chart pictorially presents cartoon characters having climbed a pyramid or ladder of success beginning with REALISTIC GOALS & ASPIRATIONS, and progressing upward through REASONABLE CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES, RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR, RECOGNIZED EFFORTS, RESPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS, and finally REALIZED POTENTIALITIES. Each step of the chart requires cooperative strategies and planning between students, teachers and administrators if success is to be achieved.

The second attachment is also a chart entitled Self-Affirmations. It is useful for introducing discussions on the primary importance of personal acceptance and goal setting. Most teachers also devise supplemental forms for students to record their priority goals and plans as to how they might be achieved. The chart itself is a graphically enlarged presentation of the following text:

***** SELF-AFFIRMATIONS *****

I believe that

I am a unique and precious human being.
I am my own best friend and my worst enemy.
I am a lovable and loving person.
I am capable of realizing my potential.
I am self-respecting and conscience free.
I am responsible for my own behavior.
I am learning from my mistakes.
I am creating a joyful life.
I am an important part of the universe.

The final example is an attachment entitled My Social & Personal Responsibility Credit List. This is a structured self-management form for the student to record credit points in ten important areas of concern. If used in conjuction with parents and positively reinforced with appropriate rewards and privileges it can help develop personal insight and motivation for learning. Most effective programs include similar record forms.

Further information regarding new programs, research reports and materials can be obtained from the National Council for Self-Esteem c/o Gail Dusa, 6641 Leyland Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95120.

SUMMARY.

Self-esteem, well managed, is a powerful force for effective learning. Students "at-risk" suffer from poor self-esteem and are in need of supportive and innovative education. Numerous studies and model programs have established the value of self-esteem programs in schools and communities. Every school district should help its students develop self-esteem and personal and social responsibility as an integrated part of its total curriculum.

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REALIZED POTENTIALITIES

RESPECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RECOGNIZED EFFORTS

RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR

REASONABLE CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

REALISTIC GOALS & ASPIRATIONS

DEVELOPING POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

*** SELF-AFFIRMATIONS ***

I believe that:

I am a unique and precious human being.

I am my own best friend and my worst enemy.

I am a lovable and loving person.

I am capable of realizing my potential.

I am self-respecting and conscience free.

I am responsible for my own behavior.

I am learning from my mistakes.

I am creating a joyful life.

I am an important part of the universe.

- MY SOCIAL & PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY CREDIT LIST -

	- Credits - A (15)	B (10)	C (5)	D (0)
1. I helped create and follow good rules for personal and social behavior. Example:				
2. I was on time and prepared to learn. Example:				
3. I completed my assignments accurately. Example:				
4. I politely assisted other persons. Example:				
5. I shared classroom chores and responsibilities. Example:				
6. I worked cooperatively on teams and study groups. Example:				
7. I contributed to schoolwide service activities. Example:				
8. I finished my homework & shared it with my parents. Example:				
9. I did my home and family chores. Example:				
10. I participated in community service programs Example:				

Total Credits:_____

I was most successful in -

I need help with -

I can improve by -